

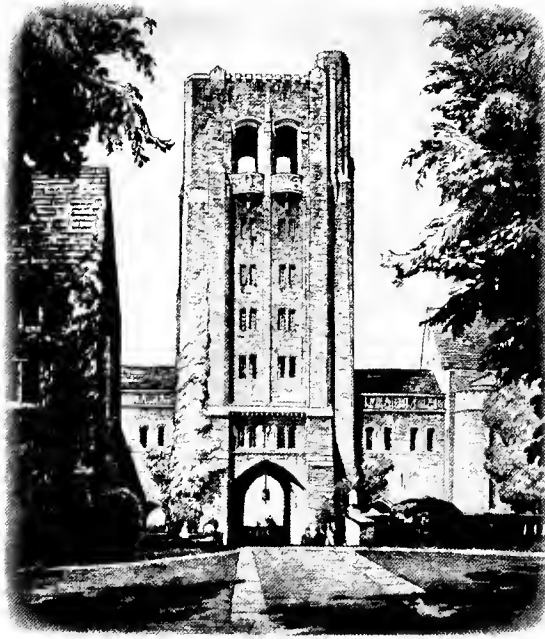
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STATE OF NEW YORK

In Memoriam

JOHN FRANCIS AHEARN

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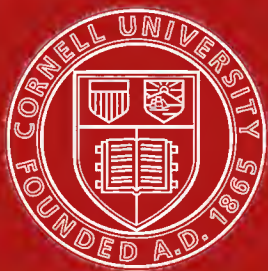
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John Francis Ahearn



Proceedings of the Legislature

of the State of New York

on the

Life and Public Services

of

John Francis Ahearn

held at the

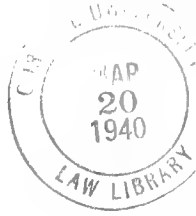
Capitol, Albany, New York



January 12, 1921

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In Memoriam

John Francis Ahearn

Born April 18, 1853
Died December 19, 1920

Senate
1890-1902

Assemblyman
1882

President of the Borough of Manhattan
1904-1909

Member New York State Constitutional
Convention 1915

John Francis Ahearn



JOHN FRANCIS AHEARN, affectionately and personally known to every man and woman on the old East Side, died December 19, 1920, at his residence, No. 296 East Broadway, New York City.

He was born in the old Seventh Ward on the east side of New York City, April 18, 1853, the son of Thomas and Ann McBennett Ahearn. His public career began in 1881 when, as a member of the County Democracy, he was elected to the Assembly, although since his boyhood he had been an active partisan. He never broke his word, he never promised anything without doing his best to make good. This was his motto during his life. Twenty years ago the politics of downtown Manhattan was dominated by a group of Tammany leaders, each member of which was more or less familiar to the public through his power and industry or picturesque characteristics. The death of John Ahearn reduces the survivors of that group to one, Thomas F. Foley.

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John Ahearn's success in the politics of his party was due to his industry. He was not picturesque like Harburger, or spectacular like the Sullivans, but more than these, his district leadership was the dominant part of his life. It was the saying in Tammany Hall that Ahearn spent more evenings in the district club house than any other leader ever had or would. That is to say, Ahearn was in the Tammany business office of the Assembly district every evening in the week and at work. If a professor of politics wished to view the methods by which Tammany Hall kept hold of this borough, he could not have done better than study the district leadership as represented by Ahearn. There is no harder mental work than patiently listening to the troubles of other people, yet that is exactly what district leadership means in the region of the poor. Men who wanted any job, or wanted some other fellow's job, or wanted a raise in salary from the city, or wanted to be transferred from one city post to another, all who belonged to the John F. Ahearn Association called on the Senator. Everybody who went to see him wanted something. All Ahearn asked in return was allegiance to the organization.

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Tammany was hard to beat in the old days when it had a large number of leaders, who, like Ahearn, put their whole lives into politics, but time has changed the character of the leaders — men who have the quality of leadership find more reward in business than in local politics.

Senator Ahearn died in his home, No. 296 East Broadway, very near the location where he was born. He had a genuine affection for his neighborhood and for the political organization known as the John F. Ahearn Association, 290 East Broadway, only three doors from where he lived, and which he served for so many years.

Although John F. Ahearn is remembered politically as a member of Tammany Hall, having been for twenty years a Tammany district leader, his entrance into politics was as an Anti-Tammany man.

Back in the days of the old County Democracy, which bitterly fought Tammany in the eighties, when John Kelly was leader of the Wigwam, Mr. Ahearn was a staunch County Democracy man. Afterwards Tammany and the County Democracy made their peace and Mr. Ahearn with the other County Democracy leaders joined the Tammany organization. For

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the last twenty years he was a Sachem of the Tammany Society. He was educated in the public schools and the College of the City of New York. It was in 1882 that Mr. Ahearn first sat in the Assembly at Albany as the representative of the old Fourth Manhattan District. That also was the first session of the Assembly in which the late President Roosevelt sat as a member and with whom he formed a deep and lasting friendship. It was also the first year the Legislature met in the present Capitol. Upon his retirement from the Assembly he became Chief Clerk in the old Essex Market Police Court, in which position he gained great popularity.

In 1889 he was elected to the Senate and served continuously in that body until 1902. In the Senate he was the author of the measure popularly called the Mothers' Bill intended to reform the system of the commitment of dependent children to charitable institutions. Students of this important question regarded the bill as the best method the State could adopt in dealing with this class of dependents. The measure was regarded as a great step forward towards the solution of an exceedingly difficult

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social problem. His efforts in its behalf, however, at that time were not successful. It subsequently became and is now the law of the State.

Senator Ahearn's name is inseparably connected with all the laws enacted during the years 1890 to 1901 relating to the Board of Education and the welfare of the teachers, firemen and police of New York City.

He succeeded in having enacted into a law the pensioning of school teachers, and although his measure in their behalf for the permanent establishment of a standard salary was vetoed by Governor Black, yet in the Legislature in 1899 he was successful in his efforts to place upon the statutes of the State a measure similar to the one previously vetoed and it earned for its author the strong friendship and unbounded popularity of the entire teaching force of his native city, a friendship that continued throughout his life. As an act of gratitude on the part of the teachers they started a fund to build him a house, but he refused the gift.

In 1903 he was elected President of the Borough of Manhattan and re-elected in 1905 for a term of four years.

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All politics breeds bitterness and no record of his public and political life would be complete which did not contain a reference to his administration of the office of President of the Borough of Manhattan, to which he was elected by an overwhelming majority in 1903 because of his excellent record in the Senate of the State of New York and re-elected in 1905. During this period of his second term a bitter conflict arose between the leader of Tammany Hall and the then Mayor of New York City for control of the Democratic organization, and true to every instinct of his nature and loyal, as he knew how to show loyalty, he remained true and loyal to his party and its leader, disdaining every inducement to betray or desert either. The Mayor through his Commissioner of Accounts and backed and supported by all the elements that sought to increase the division in the ranks of the Democratic party, had charges brought against his administration which were sustained by the Governor and his removal ordered, accompanied by the testimonial of the Governor (Hughes) that nothing in the decision was to be regarded as reflecting on the honesty of John F. Ahearn (See order of Governor

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Hughes), truly a poor use to make of the removal power. The vacancy thus created was filled by his triumphant re-election to the office by the Board of Aldermen, with which body rested the duty of filling it.

He was elected a member of the New York State Constitutional Convention of 1915 and served in it with credit and distinction.

He had been ill with pleurisy and an affection of the throat since returning as a delegate from the Democratic National Convention in San Francisco in July, 1920.

Mr. Ahearn was married to Elizabeth Atwell on February 7, 1884, who survives him and the following children: Mrs. W. J. Murray, Cincinnati, Ohio; Edward J. Ahearn, Clerk Second District Municipal Court, New York City, and Democratic leader of the Fourth Assembly District; William J. Ahearn, Assistant Corporation Counsel, New York City; Mrs. George L. Loft, New York City, and Miss Margaretta Ahearn, New York City.

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The lower East Side paid a parting tribute today to its veteran political leader and standard bearer John F. Ahearn, who died Sunday night after forty years of political activity east of the Bowery and south of Houston Street. The funeral from his residence was an expected tribute to his memory for Johnny Ahearn was beloved for his many acts of public benefaction.

Hundreds of political and personal friends joined his old neighbors outside the Ahearn residence at No. 296 East Broadway and followed the hearse to St. Mary's Church at Grand and Ridge Streets. As the body was being borne from the Ahearn residence, five hundred children of Public School No. 147 across the street stood at attention. Some thirty thousand persons watched the cortege. The services were noteworthy for the number of Jews who attended it. The Solemn High Mass of Requiem was sung by the Rev. Father Byrnes, the Rector of St. Mary's Church. The honorary pall bearers were Governor Smith, Philip Donohue, Congressman Henry M. Goldfogle, Judge Benjamin Hoffman, Judge Aaron J. Levy, Maurice Featherson, Supreme Court Justice Mitchel L. Erlanger, Supreme Court Justice Thomas F.

John Francis Ahearn

Donnelly, Supreme Court Justice Charles L. Guy and State Senator Bernard Downing.

Tammany Hall was represented by a delegation of one hundred headed by Grand Sachem John R. Voorhis. Interment was in Calvary Cemetery.—*Evening World*, December 22, 1920.

**Proceedings of the
Legislature**

In Senate

January 12, 1921



SENATOR DOWNING:

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to introduce a resolution, and I want to preface it by a word.

The resolution which I offer is in memory of one who was a member of this body for twelve years, and who on December 19, 1920, passed to his eternal reward.

During my entire political life I was associated with him in the most intimate fashion, acting many years ago when a member of this Senate as his secretary. No words of mine tonight can express the grief in my heart, but I have tried to embody it as well as I am able in the formal resolution which I now have the honor to offer and to ask the Senate to adopt.

THE PRESIDENT: The Senator from the Fourteenth asks unanimous consent to introduce a resolution. Is there objection?

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SENATOR DOWNING: I ask the resolution be read.

THE CLERK (Reading):

WHEREAS, This House has learned with profound regret of the death at his home in the City of New York in the month of December 1920, of the Honorable John Francis Ahearn, member of the Senate from 1890 to 1902;

WHEREAS, The career of John Francis Ahearn, who saw his first legislative service in the Assembly, afterwards serving in the Senate, and as Borough President of Manhattan, was marked by the creation of some of our most beneficial protective statutes, he having secured the passage of the first teachers' pension bill in this State, and having been the author of the "Mothers' Bill" which effected great reform in the treatment of dependent children, from which source the Widows' Pension Law of 1915 emanated; and

WHEREAS, The entire life of John Francis Ahearn was devoted to the distribution of practical charity, especially to indigent women and children,

John Francis Ahearn

Resolved, When the Senate adjourn tonight, it adjourn out of respect to the memory of the late John Francis Ahearn; and be it further

Resolved, That the Clerk of the Senate be and he hereby is instructed to cause to be prepared an engrossed copy of this resolution and forward the same to the family of the deceased.

THE PRESIDENT: The question is on the adoption of the resolution offered by the Senator from the Fourteenth. All those in favor of the resolution will rise.

The resolution is adopted.

In Assembly

January 12, 1921



R. DICKSTEIN, Member of the Fourth Assembly District of New York, rises on the floor of the House, on the 12th day of January, 1921.

Mr. Dickstein of New York is recognized.

MR. SPEAKER:

It is with great sorrow and grief that I arise on this floor with a few remarks before introducing a privileged resolution out of respect and esteem for the late Hon. John Francis Ahearn, a former member of this House and a member of the Senate for many years.

His loss is an irreparable one to the great section of the East Side and to the City and State of New York. He was a leader of men and a splendid character. He always fought for right and justice, his career in the Legislature established that fact beyond doubt. He spent most of his life in the welfare of his constituency and in the interest of all the people of this State.

In Memoriam

Although gone he will never be forgotten in the hearts of the people of the East Side for he served them well and often; nor will he be forgotten in the State because of the great deeds and services he rendered in the Widows' Pension Bill and many other bills which are now on the statute books of this great Empire State.

I therefore offer, Mr. Speaker, the following privileged resolution, that when the House adjourns today, it do so out of respect and memory of this great man, the Honorable John Francis Ahearn, and I move the said resolution be adopted.

The Speaker put the question to the House and a rising vote was taken, the resolution having been adopted unanimously.

In Assembly

January 12, 1921



R. DICKSTEIN offered for the consideration of the House a resolution in the words following:

WHEREAS, This house has learned with profound regret of the death at his home in the City of New York on the 19th day of December, 1920, of the Hon. John Francis Ahearn, a former member of this house, and

WHEREAS, The career of John Francis Ahearn who saw his first legislative service in this house, afterwards serving in the Senate and as Borough President of Manhattan, was marked by the creation of some of our most beneficial protective statutes, and having secured the passage of the first teachers' pension bill in this State and having been the author of the "Mothers' Bill," which effected great reform in the treatment of dependent children, from which source the Widows' Pension Law of 1915 emanated, and

John Francis Ahearn

WHEREAS, The entire life of John Francis Ahearn was devoted to the distribution of practical charity especially to indigent women and children;

Resolved, That when this House adjourn today, it do so out of respect to the memory of the late John Francis Ahearn, and be it further

Resolved, That the Clerk of the Assembly be and he hereby is instructed to cause to be prepared an engrossed copy of this resolution and forwarded to the family of the deceased.

Mr. Speaker put the question whether the House would agree to said resolution and it was determined in the affirmative, a majority of all the members elected to the Assembly voting in favor thereof, three-fifths being present.

Resolution
of the
Board of Aldermen of the
City of New York



AT a stated meeting of the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York, held on December 21, 1920, the following resolution was adopted by a rising vote:

Resolved, That this Board has learned with profound regret of the death of John F. Ahearn, who as President of the Borough of Manhattan was a former member of this body.

Mr. Ahearn, for many years was a conspicuous figure in the public life of New York City, and filled several public positions with earnestness and ability. As Member of Assembly, and for five terms as member of the Senate of the State of New York, he espoused and carried to a successful conclusion many legislative measures which resulted in great public benefit. The Board of Aldermen hereby tenders to the bereaved family its sincere condolence in their hour of affliction.

Resolved further, That a copy of this resolution, engrossed and authenticated, be transmitted to the family of the deceased, and, as a mark of respect, this Board do now adjourn.

P. J. SCULLY,
City Clerk.

Resolution
of the
Tammany Society



THE members of the Society of Tammany have learned with profound sorrow of the death of Hon. John F. Ahearn, for many years an esteemed and respected Sachem of the institution. The members and officers are requested to attend the funeral from his late residence, 296 East Broadway, at 9:30 A. M., Wednesday; thence to St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church, Ridge and Grand Streets, at 10 o'clock.

JOHN R. VOORHIS,

Grand Sachem.

Resolution
of the
John H. Ahearn
Association



WITH a grief too great for words to express announcement is made of the death on Sunday, December 19, 1920, at his home, 296 East Broadway, of our beloved standard bearer and Democratic leader of the Fourth Assembly District, John F. Ahearn. The members of the John F. Ahearn Association and of the General Committee of the Fourth Assembly District are requested to meet at the clubhouse, 290 East Broadway, on Wednesday, December 22, 1920, at 9 A. M., to attend the funeral service at St. Mary's Church, Grand and Ridge Streets, at 10 A. M.

JOHN J. CARROLL,

*President John F. Ahearn
Association.*

BERNARD DOWNING,

*Chairman, General Committee,
Fourth Assembly District.*

ISIDOR GREENBAUM,

Secretary.

Resolution
of the
New York Taxpayers'
Association



HEREAS, Hon. John F. Ahearn
has gone to eternal rest, and

WHEREAS, John F. Ahearn has
throughout his life embodied all the virtues of
unselfish public spirit and civic pride; that he
truly loved the East Side and shared with the
humblest its joys, problems and tribulations;
was a true and loyal leader and a friend of all,
irrespective of creed, nationality or color, there-
fore be it

Resolved, That the Greater New York
Taxpayers' Association extend its deepest sym-
pathy to the bereaved family in its great loss.

MEYER GOLDBERG,

President,

SAMUEL S. ISAACS,

Hon. Secretary.

